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Lesson No. 05, Processes of Outlining

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EFFECTIVE PUBLIC SPEAKING

LESSON No. 5

PROCESSES OF OUTLINING



**NORTH AMERICAN INSTITUTE
CHICAGO**

PROCESSES OF OUTLINING

LESSON No. 5

**One of a Series of Lessons in
EFFECTIVE PUBLIC SPEAKING**

By

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**NORTH AMERICAN INSTITUTE
CHICAGO**

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PROCESSES OF OUTLINING

It has been said in one of the previous lessons that the outline of a speech is a very essential element to successful utterance. Speech making may be compared to a process of construction. A whole unit with its parts properly related is to be made. This whole, if it is to be effective for the purpose intended, must be constructed according to well understood laws. This matter of building according to law is well understood in the mechanical or scientific field, but as applied to speech making it seems to have been largely forgotten, or, if not forgotten, very poorly developed in these days.

The process of constructing a speech is shown in what may be called the outline or plan. This outline or plan is to show clearly, and in their proper relation, all of the parts that go to make up the whole. Someone has said that if an outline is prop-

erly made, one may read it and gather all the essential points which may be set forth in the speech. In other words, it ought not to be necessary to hear the speech in order to gather its essential facts or ideas.

More than this, the outline is the skeleton upon which the body of the speech is moulded. To put it differently, it is the steel frame of the skyscraper. Without the steel structure the skyscraper could not stand, so without a well developed and correctly related outline, a speech will fail to carry a thoroughly organized and concrete idea.

Let us look at it from another point of view. The process of outlining is a process of classification. The same thing is done here which the scientist does. He is continually classifying the knowledge which is developed, properly arranging it, putting it in its correct relation, one point or fact or idea to another or to others. The scientist will take a single term, which has its parallel in the subject of the speech, and will classify and show relations of all the ideas under that general term. The

term "tree" is selected, and all the various kinds of trees will be classified and related as the relationships actually exist in nature. So with the speech. A title, "Patriotism in America," represents a wholeness of idea equally as well as does the term "tree." It has as well determined divisions of thought as the term trees has divisions of classification. The whole can be rightly understood and be effective for its purpose only as the parts are both properly assembled and correctly related one to the other. So a speech can accomplish the end or purpose revealed in its subject only by a complete assembling of all of its parts.

There are three qualities at least which every successful speech must possess. These are clearness, unity, and force. There is no need of defining the term "clearness." By "unity" is meant oneness or wholeness. The law of unity demands that in the discussion there shall be presented nothing that does not belong to or cannot be classified within or is not a part of the title. However attractive a non-

related point may be, it must not be brought into the discussion unless it bears a really important or vital relation to the topic. To put it differently, a point must not be included in a discussion unless its omission would weaken the presentation of the topic in some way. The term "force" is pretty well understood, but to give it a new meaning, especially as applied to either private or public speech, let us call it that quality which makes a speech interesting.

Now let us consider just a moment the relation of the outline or plan to these three qualities. It can readily be seen that if one has not carefully developed his scheme or plan of speech he may fail to include some very important idea or he may fail to put ideas in their proper relation or he may fail to join all the parts properly. Failure in any one of these three points will lead to a lack of clearness and prevent a perfect understanding of the topic. It can be seen, too, that without a clearly developed plan it would be very easy to include material in his speech which did not have any vital relation to the topic and thereby the law of

unity would be violated. It will not take much thought either to see that the working of a machine may be very faulty and its force greatly lessened because the parts are not correctly related or joined. So in a speech, because of a poorly related or incorrectly constructed plan much force may be lost. A poor connection or incorrect relation or lack of relation may lead to lack of clearness of thought or vagueness of thought or even obscurity of thought, and therefore interest is not aroused or is not held. It can readily be understood, too, that through a carefully developed plan a speaker may make it much easier for the hearer to follow him than if he had no such plan. Interest is, therefore, much more easily aroused and held if the hearer does not have to think too much to get at the speaker's meaning. Further, a speaker does not wish to have his audience forget what he has said soon after they have ceased listening to him. It will be quickly recognized that a speech well organized and correctly put together, with all its parts shown to be in their proper place, will be

much more easily remembered as a whole than a speech which is not thus effectively knit together.

There are many who recognize this necessity of a carefully developed plan but who find it difficult to carry out the process of plan-building or outlining. This difficulty in drawing an effective outline, a "speech architect plan," if you please, is due in many instances to the lack of a thorough knowledge of the subject. Familiarity with the whole subject will make possible a fairly quick recognition of the subdivisions of its thought.

Inasmuch as the process of outlining is one of classification or of construction, we must understand that there are no more kinds of trees before we can discontinue our process of classification; that all parts included in a machine or a building are known before we can construct an outline. So in making a speech one must be sure that he has carried his investigation or gathering of the facts far enough to give him a "bird's eye view" of the whole; or he must have learned by experience just

what all the parts of his subject are. To illustrate: included within the initiative and referendum, which is a political mode of action, there have been developed definite processes which are now duly recognized, and in discussing that topic one must understand what all of these processes are before he can well and effectively make an outline.

To make it simpler still, suppose one were to discuss college education in the United States. If he is at all acquainted with a college he knows the various divisions of thought included within the term. There must be an equipment such as buildings, grounds, libraries, etc. There must be a faculty, and a course of study, a student body and a body of graduates. There must be a specific purpose and aim back of the instruction to be given and well defined methods whereby this instruction is to be carried on. The divisions of thought under this title are so thoroughly developed and clearly marked and well known that one would not find great difficulty in making his plan or outline. The question would not be

a question of parts but of a proper arrangement or relation of parts, and the proper arrangement of parts would depend entirely upon the end in view in making the speech. But if one were to discuss the topic, patriotism, as simply "fidelity to the American idea," he might not so readily see the various natural divisions. There are natural divisions implied in the topic and not only implied but definitely existent. But because one does not so readily see the natural divisions within a subject he must take all the more pains to investigate its ideas carefully until he is sure he has discovered all of them, and in coming to this sureness he will have arrived at some judgment as to the various parts and relations. Again let it be said that familiarity with the ideas connected with any given topic is necessary to a ready and correct process of outlining; or to put it differently, our difficulty in developing a plan for a speech is in direct proportion to our lack of thorough-going information upon the topic.

In general, there should be three main divisions in any speech and one will do well

if he will compel himself to hold to a type of speech development that will contain these three main divisions. Other divisions may be added to these perhaps, but these at least are to be held to pretty thoroughly. There is, first, the introduction; second, the discussion; and, third, the conclusion. It will make little difference which one of the four ends of speech (discussed in an earlier lesson on "Purposes of the Speech") may be sought, this three-fold division of the development of the thought pointing to that end should be maintained.

The introduction performs the work which the word itself implies. Its office is to introduce us to the idea to be discussed. It may be said that everything that is necessary to a clear understanding of the discussion proper is to be given in this division. All definitions, explanations, processes of narrowing, statement of point of view or attitude, and giving of necessary facts should be brought into the introduction. This clears the way for the discussion proper. The idea, then, may be rapidly developed without delay or hindrance

of any sort. After the demands of the subject have been thoroughly met through the introduction and the discussion, the speech is to be finished by a concluding sentence or sentences. What the nature of the conclusion may be depends entirely upon the nature of the subject and the end it contains.

In seeking the natural subdivisions of any idea, there are five words which will be found to be very helpful. These are:

What?

Why?

Where?

How?

When?

It is not to be inferred that in developing any given topic all five of these questions need be applied. They may or they may not. For many topics the main divisions may be at once settled by these five words. In other topics one single term of the five may indicate the natural divisions.

Again it will be discovered, as has already been suggested in discussing the subject of college education, that a topic may

find its outline in a mere enumeration of its natural parts or its natural divisions or its natural points. A discussion of the American form of government will at once have to show given divisions of thought that are inherent in the very form itself. Many topics permit of no latitude or choice in the order of arranging the parts. These sustain already certain fixed relations and cannot be placed in any other order or relation.

EXERCISES.

These exercises are provided as a means of testing the students' Knowledge of the subject and for training through actual practice. Exercises are not to be sent back to the School.

Using the group of subjects below, first narrow each topic as often as may be necessary to secure one that can adequately be treated in a half hour.

Second: Clearly define all terms in the final topic secured.

Third: Make an outline of two, three, four, five, or more main divisions.

Fourth: Now, under these main divisions of the subject, write out the subdivisions, or headings as they are sometimes called.

Fifth: Arrange your facts and material under these main and sub-headings.

Railway Development.

The Progress of Invention.

The Money Power.

Municipal Government.

A Citizen Must Be Interested in Politics.

Why Poverty Exists.

The National Game.

How Courts Are Organized.

The Process of Naturalization.

Sixth: Make at least three different outlines for each one of the following topics:

The Town I Live In.

The Material Greatness of the United States.

The Modern Automobile.

The Christmas Season.

The Labor Movement.

Big Business.

The Reading of Books.

The American Nation.

Choosing One's Life Work.

In each instance, before making the outline, narrow the general topic at least once.

Seventh: Select at least one outline and make a ten minute speech upon it. Make every effort to imagine the presence of an audience.

"Every person has two educations, one which he receives from others, and one, more important, which he gives to himself."

—Gibbon.

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